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Abstract

Research into the photographic representation of childhood. The work explores the individual identity of children and the complexity of their character. The project takes the form of two series of photographic prints on exhibition at the School of Art Gallery from March 4th to 11th, 2005. The project is the outcome of a year long studio practice project together with this report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

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Johnson Family

Battye-Matheson Family

Brennan Family

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Introduction

My proposal for Master of Visual Arts was to examine my childhood through memory, my archives, and newly found images. My original proposal is featured in appendix 2, outlining my ideas and the background to my project. From this beginning I began research into images of children historically and in contemporary society. This led me to split my work in two distinct themes and areas of study. A series of portraits based on the child in contemporary society and a series that re-examined my childhood through photos that I restructured. My personal brief for this work was to create beautiful images through photography. A seemingly simple brief that has manifested itself in the form of a comprehensive study of childhood both current and reflective.

Research

The themes of memory and childhood formed the basis for my Masters project. Research into the place of the child in photography and art drew me back to several different theorists and artists. Anne Higonnet's *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*¹ was an ideal work to start with as she examines the place and social progression of the child in art from early representations. She charts that children previous to the mid-C18th were figured as small adults and were in effect adults in all they did without innocence, socially, psychically or sexually. A new vision of the romantic childhood of beauty and innocence was introduced by painters Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Henry Raeborn and John Everett Millais. My personal definition of innocence is based on the ideals of purity of heart and mind, a blank canvas created and living free from the conception of adult sexuality, desires and fears. This concept of childhood is still popular today and we learn from Higonnet that 'historians date the modern, western, concept of an ideally innocent childhood to be somewhere around the seventeenth century. Until then, children had been understood as faulty small adults, in need of correction and discipline, especially Christian children who were thought to be born with sin.'² The romantic child was an extremely popular genre that reflected the social ideal of the child as innocent and pure on all levels. However there was another side to this romantic representation of childhood. As Higonnet states 'The romantic child makes a good show of having no class, no gender, add no thoughts - if being socially, sexually, and physically innocent.'³ This representation is clearly an ideal but the child is shown as having no thoughts or character of their own which to me is an unrealistic portrayal of children both historically and today. The next step in the representation of the child worked against this concept of innocence. The works of photographers Julia Margaret Cameron and Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll) have created a new image of childhood, in current theorists eyes, despite the fact that in her time Cameron's work was seen as an idealised representation of childhood. Her work has been re-examined and is seen to be more questioning of the romantic ideals in her use of the child body. Cameron's work was also based on the use of the camera as tool of manipulation: 'combining the real and the ideal and sacrificing nothing of the truth by

¹ From: Higonnet, Anne, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Thames and Hudson LTD, London, 1998.

² Ibid., Pg. 8.

³ Ibid., Pg. 24.

all possible devotion to poetry and beauty.⁴ In her work she used smudges, blurs, hairs and other imperfections to create atmospheric prints, but used the sensuality of the body, the skin and the flesh to full pictorial advantage.

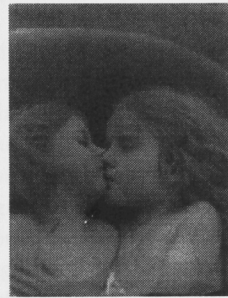
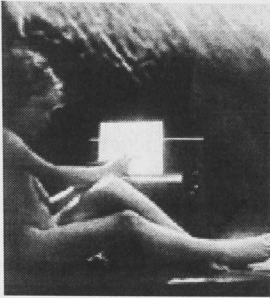


Fig. 1: *Cupid's Pencil of Light*, 1870, Julia Margaret Cameron
Fig. 2: *The Double Star*, 1864, Julia Margaret Cameron

Dodson believed that the camera was an instrument to convey reality. His works were and still are controversial pieces as they convey young girls in poses that reflect our impressions of adult sexuality and knowing character. Carroll's photographs 'like his nude study of Evelyn Hatch would not have been ambiguous to Victorian audiences. Then, as now, her reclining odalisque pose clearly signalled adult and available feminine sexuality.'⁵ His works show a childhood enactment of adult sexuality, for example in *Reclining Nude* (Fig. 4) the girl has her hands placed behind her head and her body is laid out in a pose often assumed in adult female nudes. Thus this image is can be seen as dangerous in its ability to inspire and feed the sexual desires of child abusers as well as raise questions about the appropriateness of an adult male photographer (Charles Dodson) photographing young unrelated naked girls. This concern creates an unsettling feeling to most adults who see the images as a reflection of sexuality in the children themselves rather than solely in the visual representation.

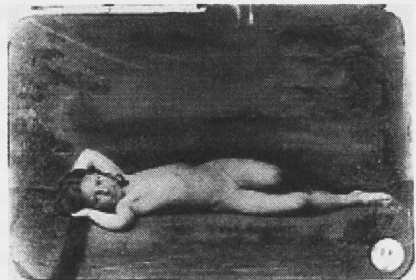


Fig. 3: *Alice Liddell as the Beggar Maid*, 1859, Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll)
Fig. 4: *Reclining Nude*, 1879, Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll)

⁴ From: Higonnet, Anne, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Thames and Hudson LTD, London, 1998, Pg. 111 (Footnote 4).

⁵ Ibid. Pg. 123.

In contemporary society we are in a transitional period in the history of childhood 'a time in which the old signs of childhood are no longer viable but new ones are yet to become credible. In the absence of known and acceptable alternatives, only the destruction of the old order appears evident.'⁶

Within the context of art, parents often come under fire for using their children as models. Sally Mann is one contemporary example whose photographs of her children naked have aroused much debate and censure. Her images are often intimate and sometimes unsettling moments, for example *The Wet Bed*, 1987, shows her daughter Virginia sprawled naked on a mattress soaked with urine. Such an image confronts some people and her work has been a target of people claiming that she is a bad mother, damaging her children in the shooting and presentation of her work. Questions are often raised about the motives of parents who involve their children in such a spectacle, but never enough about the motives of the imaging industries in society who use the child image due to its effectiveness in advertising. Due to this effective commercial use of the child image, much like the female body, will always be available in media and advertising and for use and misuse in our society.

In today's world all the difficulties of the depiction of romantic children have surfaced and the representation of the knowing child has come out of the woodwork. I define knowing as the depiction of children as aware, sexually and mentally. These depiction's represent the individuality and complexity of mind that is in contrast with the blank mind often associated in the image of the innocent romantic child. Sally Mann's photographs present her children as childlike but also as individuals, physically and psychologically giving them much more depth than the romantic child. This new knowing child is more physical and challenging than the romantic child and is considered to be more dangerous and thus has not achieved as much prominence in advertising and the media. The romantic child presents a vision of the ideal childhood but it is only a vision and not a reality. As Anne Higonnet states 'according to romantic pictures of children innocence must be an edenic state,'⁷ and in turn the child cannot know the adult. By creating such an ideal vision of childhood we suffer a greater loss and longing for it as we grow older. Thus we embrace the romantic child even more as though clinging to what we can never again have or may have never had in the first place. Even today 'photographs remain consistent with their romantic precedents. The overwhelming majority of commercially successful photographs centred on children's bodies look innocent...we are offered visual pleasure, but only on the condition that we perceive children's bodies in terms of their utter difference from adult bodies...who hardly inhabit the present physical world.'⁸ The photographs of knowing children enter society with an ambiguity of meaning which can often be seen as having real evil consequences. The beauty in the images can often be surpassed by the fear, often exaggerated, of the damage to the pictured children and consequences for real children. This does not discount the reality of child abuse in society and the creation of some images which are evidence of abuse. However the images that I am discussing revolve around the knowing child in the field of art taken with the consent of the children and parents with no evidence of abuse. This consent being defined as the willing participation of an individual with the knowledge and understanding of the future use of the image and ensuing consequences. The

⁶ From: Higonnet, Anne, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Thames and Hudson LTD, London, 1998, Pg. 192.

⁷ Ibid. Pg. 28.

⁸ Ibid. Pg. 77.

characteristics of the knowing child that interest me are the fact that they are neither available nor controllable by the photographer or the viewer. They have the power of both the child and adult gaze. The knowing child appears to have the complexity of mind and the individuality of character that is often associated with the experience of growth in adulthood. Thus the knowing child seems to encompass the adult mind in the child body. This duality gives them a depth and a sense of being unreal that draws us in to this new representation of the child. However as Higonnet states 'just because children might be sexual does not mean they can deal with the ways in which adults conduct themselves sexually.'⁹ It is this distinct difference between the depiction of children as aware and our fear that they cannot deal with such situations that are the catalyst for the fear of child abuse.

The research into the child in art inspired me to show the reality of childhood today where children are a mixture of both the romantic and the knowing child. The world today is much more divided than the world of the romantic child and children are less sheltered from the world around them. Hence they are more aware of adult behaviour and use this knowledge in life to mimic adult behaviour. In her introduction Higonnet acknowledges that 'we are living through a major change in our culture's understanding of childhood'¹⁰, it is this time of change that I am acknowledging and presenting through my work.

I chose to present five different series of work within the one exhibition to present a well rounded view of childhood. The first set, *The Romantic Series*, is a response to my research into the image of the child in art. This series was created with a more formal approach to shooting where the background painting was set up and each child had a separate sitting. During these shoots the child chose their own poses and performed spontaneously for the camera. The results were beautiful, soft images where the children appear graceful and primarily innocent. The next two series that grew out of *The Romantic Series* were *The Klimt Series* and *The Blue Couch Series*. In these two series the children are more active and playful with the camera changing point of view from the more static nature of *The Romantic Series*. I chose to present these works together as the images combine features of both the romantic child and the knowing child. To present a contemporary rounded view of childhood I decided to shoot a more random, documentary series simply known as *Childhood*. This series presented the children at their most active and also most natural state where they were interacting and I was on the outer shooting but not interfering with their play. This series captures the character and individuality of each child through my eyes. I also chose to exhibit the work of contemporary children alongside a series, *Past Images*, which documents pieces of my own childhood from family photos. This added to the show through a representation of childhood in retrospect as well as contemporary childhood.

The subject of family photos is also of great interest to me and this year I have researched this in relation to my own family photos and memories. In a re-examination of my life and identity through photographs I have headed back to a place where I spent a lot of time in my life, pouring over the family album. 'Entire family identities are built around photographs. It replaces diaries, letters and other verbal records'¹¹ as we are all fascinated with our image and identity.

⁹ From: Higonnet, Anne, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Thames and Hudson LTD, London, 1998, Pg. 224.

¹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 8.

¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 88.

Families, defined by their children, are represented by images and family memories are woven around the photographic collection. My own fascination with photography and family imagery began in my childhood. I would spend hours in the study looking at hundreds of family photos.

From this beginning I have headed into a study of my childhood searching through the same albums that fascinated me in my youth. These shots inevitably record the loss of my childhood, a place and space that I can never relive except through these images as there are images missing from the album of my memories. The images that have been left out of the family album often tell us more about a family in their normality: 'The ordinariness of it's moment, in part by the extra ordinariness of its insight, a side of family life that shapes family identities as surely as happy smiling kodak moments.'¹²

Anne Marsh's work *The Darkroom- Photography and the Theatre of Desire* examines the role of desire in photography throughout history and today from a Lacanian perspective. She states that 'photography...preserves an ancient desire to become Other, to be present in another form, in another time and place.'¹³ This recreation of ourselves in another form is elemental in the creation of our identity and photography is a prime form for this representation. Works can also be taken into a different context and thus been infused with a different index of meaning. For example when photos are taken from the forum of the home into the art gallery they are viewed differently removing a layer of understanding and designated relationships that they had within the home. Marsh's concern lies in the distinction between fantasy and reality in photography and that 'photography's "truth" is sometimes the desire of the operator.'¹⁴

This desire for the image of the child body is evident in the broad use of children in the media and advertising. My own desire for the image of the child body is presented through my work in the depiction of my own truth of childhood in contemporary society. This is how I see childhood today through the faces and bodies of my partner's nieces and nephews: A chance for me to recreate an image of ideal childhood through new children, and in the case of *Past Images* through my own childhood in retrospect. The later project is where Marsh's concerns are more valid as my work is a direct desire for a recreation of my own childhood using my body upon reflection.

Like Higonnet, Marsh examines the direct gaze in the work of Sally Mann stating that 'in some photographs the children appear to be actively resisting the desire of the mother; their gaze interrogates the viewer and challenges the look. It is only in the images that there is no returned gaze, that we, as viewers can see the children in terms of passive innocence.'¹⁵ For example, in one of Mann's most famous photographs *Emmett, Jessie and Virginia*, 1989, Virginia poses with her hands behind her back pushing her torso out, with a stubborn expression on her face, gazing at her mother as if to challenge her mother's gaze. This direct gaze is a feature of my work and reflects my desire to show the depth of character within the child with their range of moods as well as presenting the reality of their innocence in reference to adult thoughts, fears and desires. The camera is used as a performative tool with the child as

¹² From: Higonnet, Anne, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Thames and Hudson LTD, London, 1998, Pg. 214.

¹³ From: Marsh, Anne, *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire*, Macmillan Publishers, Melbourne, 2003, Pg. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid. Pg. 13.

¹⁵ Ibid. Pg. 252.

they try to reflect the ideals of the photographer and pose to please.

From this research I divided my work into two separate examinations of childhood. Firstly a project based on the reality of childhood today in relation to the romantic and knowing child and ideals attached. These works involve portraits of the traditional concept of childhood as well as works that challenge this ideal with more active and aware expressions by the children. The second series consist of works created out of research into my own past through photographs and reconstructing memory.

Influential Artists

In my research of childhood I have delved extensively into a range of artists both Australian and International. These artists have provided a background to my work as both inspiration and as a thematic base from which I have branched out into my own representation of childhood.

The four most important artists in relation to my work are Loretta Lux, Nicholas Nixon, Sally Mann and Polixeni Papapetrou. Their work forms a distinct movement of photographers who focus on the representation of childhood through their own children or in the case of Loretta Lux the children of close friends.

Loretta Lux's portraits are beautifully frozen moments that explore the connection between the child's self and the world. By using the Ilfochrome process her prints are saturated with colour and in a seemingly unreal light. Her use of posing the children in uncanny stances emphasises the individuality and character within the self of the child. Her works has been photoshopped with the eyes of the children enlarged and the backgrounds manipulated. This manipulation gives the children a life of their own in print as something that is beyond the ordinary. This digital composition has been used to meet Lux's ideals of perfection. This follows a common thread in the search for perfection in the representation of the child body often presented through art in both photographs and paintings. Her work inspired me to delve into artistic aspects of children's portraiture and create a beautiful series of works that reflected the place and character of children in Australia through their interactions of play and performance with the camera.

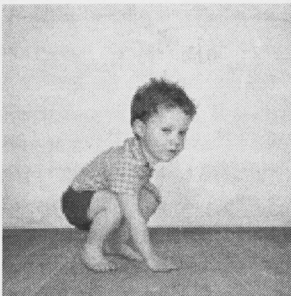


Fig.5: *Study of A Boy 1*, 2002, Loretta Lux



Fig.6: *Study of a Girl 2*, 2002, Loretta Lux

Nicholas Nixon has photographed his children, their friends, and classmates throughout his career. His black and white portraits are produced in the style of documentary art photography where pieces of the everyday are presented in the art world. His working

process is similar to mine in that I want my works to reflect the reality of childhood as well as challenge the ideals of both the romantic and knowing child. This combination of elements is central to my work, presented through the use of several series in one exhibition hang. Nixon's beautiful black and white prints feature moments of emotional intensity, fun, beauty, normality and bizarre faces and gestures. Through this bare, no strings photography shots appear random but magical moments are captured. It is this approach that has inspired me to continue to work in my natural documentary artistic style. Visually his work features a range of styles from close cropped, for example Fig. 7, to wide shots as in Fig. 8. The children in Nixon's work also offer a range of poses both interacting with the camera and alternatively with other children. This variety in visual content creates a realistic documentary style which I have also created through my series *Childhood*.



Fig.7: From *School*, Nicholas Nixon.

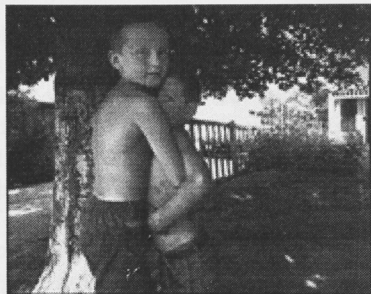


Fig.8: *Chestnut St. Louisville*, 1982, Nicholas Nixon.

Sally Mann's work is based upon the theme of childhood and 'spinning a story of what it is to grow up.'¹⁶ She uses her children in photographs that reflect the beauty of childhood but also the fear of the representation of the aware and sexual child. Her work explores that of the knowing child, one with adult attitudes and assertiveness as opposed to childhood innocence. This places emphasis of features picked up from adults and contemporary culture and their negative influence. She explores the grand themes that frame our lives and deaths, such as immortality, fleeting youth, role-playing, growing up, and the bare bones of childhood through reality and symbolism. Her work is a exquisite and comprehensive exploration of childhood in contemporary society with it's beauty and also it's sadness. The work below exemplifies the comparison between the Jessie dolled up role-playing as the overtly sexual Madonna and Jessie in her natural state. This is an excellent depiction of the fear of adults of the appearance of the sexualised knowing child, that she will be sexually aware and the implications of this as this breaks all social conventions. In my work I aim to show the reality of childhood in a natural light that neither favours the innocent or the knowing child but a range of images that covers the diversity of childhood in life.

¹⁶ From: Mann, Sally, *Immediate Family*, Aperture, New York, 1992.

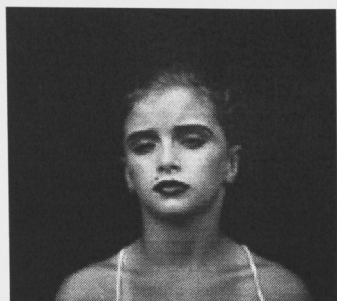


Fig.9: *Jessie as Madonna*, Sally Mann



Fig.10: *Jessie*, Sally Mann

Polixeni Papapetrou's work explores the iconography of childhood based on works by Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodson). Her work raises questions of the representation of children in art as well as the way in which the child represents themselves and the boundaries of the child body. This is explored through the use of dress-up and performances that act as a representation of identity. One of her techniques is the remaking of art from art history, namely Dodson, which re-examines the identity of the contemporary child through the relationship to history. For example in Fig. 13 she presents a modern version of Dodson's *Alice Liddell as the Beggar Maid* (Fig. 3) with a whole different set of implications than Dodson's work as she is the mother of the model rather than an unrelated male figure. For me this gives Dodson's work more of a dangerous edge as the relationships are unknown as opposed to Papapetrou's work where the mother daughter relationship is well known. However this can create different implications about parents using their children, pushing the boundaries of the child body with children whose consent is usually based upon pleasing their parents.

Ideals of childhood innocence are also explored in the use of Olympia's young body presented in her work in a range of poses and adult like gazes. Her clothing is also specially made so that it appears to be small adult clothing rather than children's costumes. What I like about her work is her personal perspective of the psychological and physical individuality of the child seen through her photographs. It is this individuality that I also explore in my work attempting to show the place of the contemporary child in society.

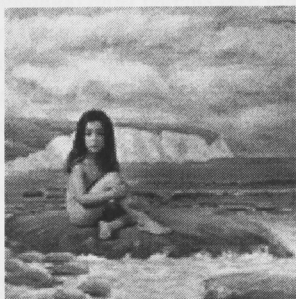


Fig.11: *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Beatrice Hatch Before White Cliffs*, 2003, Polixeni Papapetrou

Fig.12: *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Xie Kitchin (Sleeping)*, 2003, Polixeni Papapetrou

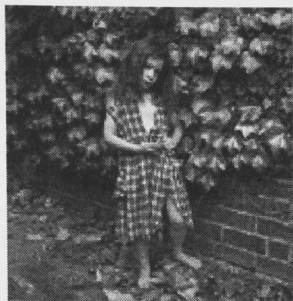


Fig.13: *Olympia as Alice Liddell as a Beggar Maid*, 2002, Polixeni Papapetrou

Fig.14: *Olympia as Alice Liddell Dreaming by the River Bank*, 2002, Polixeni Papapetrou

Masters Work

I began my project at the end of 2003 playing around with the idea of the nightie. I was first interested in the nightie because for me it crossed the boundary of childhood innocence and adult sexuality. One object with such different insinuations created a wealth of questions such as where does this boundary start and end and is it even a clear boundary? Looking at nighties from my childhood led to be examine photos and slides of my past in a new light.

In the new year I began my research into theories and artists who studied childhood and the image of the child in art. Struggling with personal views on childhood and methods of representation has led me to this study. The idea of how memories cling like film reels repeating in our heads as adults and how obsessed with the past and not overcome it how we are still 'the child.' With my work I aim to present an expression of personal narratives of memory in still photography, as photos reveal a constructed past of both the photographer and viewer.

Thus my work was branched off into three distinct directions. The idea of the nightie, re-examination of my past images and the child in art.

Portrait Series of Contemporary Childhood

During childhood most parents take hundreds of photos of their children. As they grow into adolescence the photos become less and less and photos are taken at events rather than everyday life. The everyday shots of childhood present a world where everything is new and each expression unconsciously natural as we have less foibles at such an age. In the teen years and adulthood we express ourselves more through our words - spoken and written; Spontaneous moments are less likely to be found as we are more composed and usually put up a front for cameras - privacy and images issues prevail. Thus I have chosen to photograph children at an age where their identity is more naturally conveyed and I believe it is the true essence of character that is exposed. The children that I will photograph are aged 2-8 years, with the 8 year old just on the boundary where he is becoming less natural and more embarrassed by performing with the camera around.

As an artist I aim to show the beauty and complexity of childhood by photographing the children in times of play and social activity. Their interactions with each other as well as with myself and the camera will form the basis of this study as I aim to capture as much character

and identity as possible. This can be found in the children's poses, expressions and gestures as well as the performative aspects in their relationship with the camera.

I began this project with photographing a series that will be known as the Romantic Series. Through this series of portraits composed in front of romantic paintings I am raising questions about the ideal image of childhood. From the idealised romantic vision and the feared knowing or sexual child. My subjects remain undefined, separate from the paintings yet not fully knowing and sexual. This depth of complexity and beauty forms the basis for my photographic practice.

The individuality of children as whole complex beings is central to my study and though touched on in my Romantic Series I have created a second group of works to reflect the reality of contemporary childhood with the children in their natural environment. These works will show their individuality and depth of character that they are not simply 'kids' or 'children' with no thoughts, no minds or desires.

My work addresses issues of personal identity in the way that the children express themselves in singular and in the group dynamic. Through this I aim to create a vision of contemporary childhood identity and role play that explores the boundaries of the child body, gender, ethnicity and class through performance. Specifically the work deals with the childhood of white Australian children raised in the bush land setting of Cooma, however they could be from anywhere and the images signal that this is a reflection of a universal childhood as there are not many markers to signify their location or place in time.

The Romantic Series presents images of a constructed childhood where the children have clearly been set up in front of the paintings but are free to express themselves within that space.

On a whole the work is also a reflection of the balance between purity, innocence and the sexual, knowing. This struggle has gripped photographs of children for a long time. The child is primarily innocent but as they grow, they grow towards knowing and understanding. Through this I am studying and challenging the concept of the ideal child against the reality of childhood and the child's personal expression of character and realisation of the self. Each work is a collaboration between the sitter/model and myself as photographer watching them interact in their lives and selecting the pieces that I find represent the ideals of contemporary childhood. Making children's bodies look innocent has led to great commercial success for many photographers. My work does not place them in this light of knowing or simply reflect the complete innocence of the romantic child but a reflection of contemporary society.

In the beginning of the year I gave myself one theme and one theme only: To create beautiful images through photography. I believe that I have done this through the use of aesthetics and technical control that were central to my work.

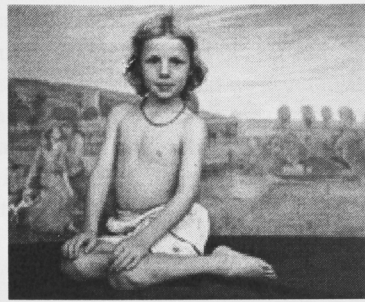
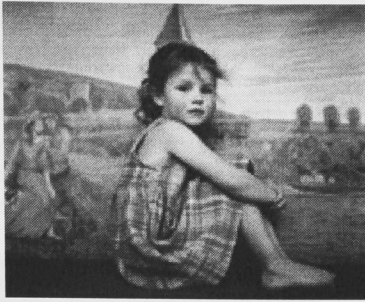


Fig.15: Molly, From *The Romantic Series*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004.

Fig.16: Tory Reclined, From *The Romantic Series*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004.

Past Images

I began the year by exploring my own past through photographs and slides and began a construction of my own childhood from these images. This meant that I could use my own body to present chosen elements of my youth, challenging the idea of idealised childhood. This created an interesting challenge to the use and misuse of child imagery as I was a consenting adult using images of myself as a child. This raises questions about how much is acceptable to show in an image of a child and in what context without concerns of the endangering children. Also of importance is the debate of whether there is a difference in meaning if the child is now a consenting adult versus the images of children shown when they are still a child.

There is a voyeuristic aspect to the personal surveillance of family photographs. They offer up keys or clues to my character but these hidden secrets are never revealed only created conclusions can be placed upon them by the individual viewer.

The work is a collaboration between my parent's eyes and my own reflection of the work today. The selection of images was chosen by my parents in their choice of the singular moment that they captured as well as the images that they kept versus the ones that they threw away. From this basis I returned to the photographs and then choose my own pieces of the images that I wanted to keep and those that were redundant. This was through a process of scanning all materials, including slide and photos both old and newly found images, into the computer. I went through each image in photoshop experimenting with cropping each image. From these crops I selected works that appealed to me for several different reasons such as posture, gesture, expression and visual construction. The resulting selection was thematically and ethically diverse and presented different aspects of my childhood in reflection, from birth to early childhood. The final work is childhood seen through fragmented memories; pasted together from old photos and objects. Leaving the texture and indications of the past, as indeed all images are, a chosen past from images kept, lost or tossed. Through this process I am choosing pieces of the images I pieced together a construction of childhood images that have created the fabric of my life and personal identity. My desire for searching within these images has come from recent discoveries of unseen photos and elements within photos I had never noticed before; Pieces of my identity and hidden memory. For the viewer I offer up beautiful reflective pieces of my childhood for their own reflection on memory, life and the selection process that governs our photographic collections and identity.

This is the fabric of my life but also with generic references so they can be related to by the

population, minimising the facial content within the cropped pieces.

This is a process that we go through constantly in our life of collecting, choosing and discarding elements of our lives through photographs and other objects that we accumulate. We take the pieces that we want and reject the rest; a shorthand of what we see our lives to be (or what our family sees). I have reconstructed the past through personal selection (gestures, emotions, fabrics), finding beautiful images captured in my past, glimpses or fragments of ourselves, in search of ourselves, our soul, our identity.

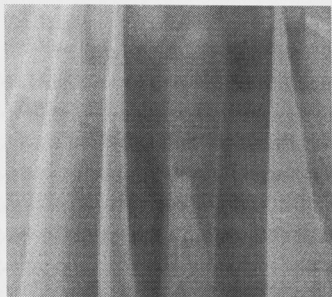


Fig.17: *Ballet*, From *Past Images*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004

Fig.18: *Going to the Fair*, From *Past Images*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004.



Fig.19: *First Day*, From *Past Images*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004

Fig.20: *Double Negative*, From *Past Images*, Thouraya Hammami, 2004

Nighties

The object of the nightie bridges the gap between adult sexuality and childhood innocence. It is full of issues related to the danger of sexuality in children and the fear that children will be taken from their beds. This fear is ever present but highlighted with the case of Elizabeth Smart who was kidnapped from her bedroom, a place once considered safe to leave your children. I had the idea to create a dramatic narrative series based on these ideas using myself as an adult in the nightie in filmic shots of danger scenes.

Through the use of the nightie I also wanted to examine the role of fabric to femininity through the patterns and designs. I searched out and purchased several nighties from op-shops and created a small series of photograms based on this idea. The works were very colourful and beautiful as a small series. I decided not to keep this together with my other two series as it seem to confuse what I was representing in the children's portraits. With too many elements of sexuality and voyeurism within the exhibition I think it would hint more towards the danger

of children and detract from my main focus the study of contemporary childhood and a re-examination of my own through the use of gesture, posture and expression.

In conclusion I have created an exhibition of work made up of five separate series that form a well rounded and realistic view of contemporary childhood. A representation that exists somewhere between the extremes of the romantic and knowing child. These works are a culmination of a years worth of research, examination and physical creation of images resulting in the twenty-six works on display in the final exhibition.

APPENDIX 1: List of Illustrations

- Fig. 1:** *Cupid's Pencil of Light*, Julia Margaret Cameron, 1870
Fig. 2: *The Double Star*, Julia Margaret Cameron, 1864
Fig. 3: *Alice Liddell as the Beggar Maid*, Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll), 1859
Fig. 4: *Reclining Nude*, Charles Dodson (Lewis Carroll), 1879
Fig. 5: *Study of a Boy 1*, Loretta Lux, 2002
Fig. 6: *Study of a Girl 2*, Loretta Lux, 2002
Fig. 7: *From School*, Nicholas Nixon
Fig. 8: *Chestnut St. Louisville*, Nicholas Nixon, 1982
Fig. 9: *Jessie as Madonna*, Sally Mann
Fig. 10: *Jessie*, Sally Mann
Fig. 11: *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Beatrice Hatch Before White Cliffs*, Polixeni Papapetrou, 2003
Fig. 12: *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Xie Kitchin (Sleeping)*, Polixeni Papapetrou, 2003
Fig. 13: *Olympia as Alice Liddell as Beggar Maid*, Polixeni Papapetrou, 2002
Fig. 14: *Olympia as Alice Liddell Dreaming by the River Bank*, Polixeni Papapetrou, 2002
Fig. 15: *Molly*, From 'The Romantic Series', Thouraya Hammami, 2004
Fig. 16: *Tory Reclined*, From 'The Romantic Series', Thouraya Hammami, 2004
Fig. 17: *Ballet*, From 'Past Images', Thouraya Hammami, 2004
Fig. 18: *Going to the Fair*, From 'Past Images', Thouraya Hammami, 2004
Fig. 19: *First Day*, From 'Past Images', Thouraya Hammami, 2004
Fig. 20: *Double Negative*, From 'Past Images', Thouraya Hammami, 2004

APPENDIX 2:

Original Project Proposal: Memory - Image Maps

Thouraya Hammami

Aims of the Proposal

The fluidity of memory and the mind is the topic I aim to explore for my masters degree. There are many areas which I hope to examine; Researching real images from the past, unseen and common pictures that reveal and conceal memories. The aim of this is to trigger memories and explore the past through the eyes of those closest to me who have photographed me, mainly my father. The re-examining and cropping of images will reveal an imagined or tampered past. I hope to play on the ideas of real memories, repressed memories, created or suggested memories and dreamscapes.

In another element I want to recreate past events, both real and imagined, mixing them with true images to map out a fictional past.

The strength of images to our memory, whether real or imagined is tremendous. Many adults are obsessed with or affected by a past they cannot overcome, they are in effect still a child inside. The need for love and acceptance from our parents is mighty and the impact upon our memories and the way we are viewed is pivotal. In the journey of looking at memories and the mind I hope to incorporate the way that our parents see us and they way in which our development is affected.

In piecing together a past there are several examples of women who believed they were sexually abused in youth when this has not been the case. It is a thin line to tread as it is hard to prove or disprove but many psychologists have been accused of leading or suggesting clients to create false memory. It is this fine line that I hope to explore in my work.

The mind is is an instrument that can easily be manipulated by photographs, objects and other people. Memories both real or imagined can play in our minds like movies repeating over again, often changing with our growth and view of the world. Photographs and video footage provide us with a stable point that we can use to guide our memories but like are mind they are fluid and serve to both help and hinder our memory.

Photographs reveal a constructed past, usually created by our family and friends. When viewed we also construct pieces of the puzzle and add layers to the image. My idea is to reconstruct past images and create new images that together will create my own memory image maps and prove the fluidity of memory and the mind.

Methods and Resources

For the work I will start by collecting and scanning images, slides and negatives from the past. reconstructing these images using my own memories to refigure past events. I will use the resources of the Photomedia department in the computer lab, studio and darkrooms to recreate a fictionalised past, playing on ideas of memory.

The images I hope to create will be large scale photos made up of different memory signifiers, objects and photos. I will also create images that signify real and fictionalised memories, proving the fluidity of the mind and the fallacies that exist in memory.

Context of Study

Memory and photography have been intrinsically linked from the birth of the camera. Many critics have examined the theory behind the link between our memories and the photos that aim to capture them. These theorists include Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and in more recent years Susan Sontag and Catherine Keenan. Marianne Hirsch also examines the nature of family photographs, narrative and memory.

Several artists have also expressed their own ideas on photography and memory through their works. Deborah Paauwe explores her own childhood memories and recreates these images in a very theatrical style. She explores ideas of sexuality, repression and childhood growth into adolescence. Anne Ferran's work looks at history and memory through haunting photograms of clothing of early New Zealand settlers, emphasising the absence of the body in history. Donigan Cumming's work *Pretty Ribbons* involves many elements of the past and history through the body and articles of his model Nettie Harris. Old photographs and clothing

surround her completing a image that encapsulates life, death and memory. Tina Barney has recreated images through the perspective of memory. These images, revolving around her sister and memories from her youth create such interesting works that show the impact of memory in contrast to the images that we have of the past. These artists have all explored ideas of memory, history and photography in original and creative ways. I aim to show my own perspective of memory, images and the fluidity of the past in my work.

List of Artists Researched

Katy Grannan	Anne Ferran	Deborah Paauwe	Donigan Cumming
Tina Barney	Larry Clark	Lennart Nilsson	

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APPENDIX 3: Curriculum Vitae

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2003 Graduate Diploma of Art (Visual) in Photomedia
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1999-2001 Bachelor of Arts Double Major in Film and English
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Exhibitions

2005 ANU, School of Art, *Present Tense*, Postgraduate Graduating Show

2004 ANU, School of Art, *Horizons*, Postgraduate Graduating Show

2001 UNSW, School of Theatre, Film and Dance, Graduating Film Show

Awards

2004 ANU, School of Art Materials Scholarship

2004 Arts ACT Emerging Artist Grant

Employment

National Gallery of Australia

Information Services 2002-Present

Fox Studios Australia

Wardrobe Department 1999-2001

Experience

2001 Short Film *Blindsight*

1997 Costume Designer for Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

1997 Costume Designer for Menander's *The Girl From Samos*

1996 ABC Television Scenic Art Department

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Visual Arts Graduate Program

GRADUATE DIPLOMA of ART

Thouraya Hammami

REPORT
PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART
2003

Abstract

Research into the nature of the family. The work explores the genetic and physical links in the family as well as the deep emotion roots. The project takes the form of two series of photographic prints on exhibition at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from February 20th to 27th, 2004. The project is the outcome of a year of Studio Practice together with the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

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Steven Joyce
Kiah Joyce
Carmel Caldwell
Jim Caldwell
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Tory Caldwell
Molly Caldwell
Nolita Johnson
Shane Johnson
Kealan Johnson
Damon Johnson
David Battye
Wendy Matheson
Jack Matheson
Regina Brennan
Peter Brennan
Presley Brennan
Jeanita Battye
Allan Hunter
Phoenix Battye
Chezdonyx Battye
Arlen Battye

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Introduction

“When the good pictures come, we hope they tell truths, but truths “told slant” just as Emily Dickinson commanded!”

My proposal for entry into the course of study was to examine maternity and the ideas of motherhood in society versus the reality of the experience. My original proposal is featured in appendix 2, outlining my ideas and the background to my project.

I began semester one by looking into artists and theorists who explored ideas of motherhood and maternity in society. Marianne Hirsch's Family Frames delves into memory, death, maternity and the family. Her ideas on the maternal gaze and representations of women deal with the ambiguities of the experience of motherhood and the family. She examines this through the uncertainty of emotions versus the images that are prevalent in society. By studying photos from her past she assesses the emotions she had with the image of maternity to reveal a discrepancy where many women are disconnected from their child. She describes an image of herself as an unwilling new mother: “Here is a picture that records those feelings that photographic conventions, especially those conventions of representing new mothers, usually censor - panic, reluctance, a plea for help.”² It is into these convention I wanted to delve. Going against the grain of family snapshots to show a side of motherhood and the family that is rarely seen: “Family is not as united and uncomplicated as the photographs and films might suggest”³

Susan Maushart's The Mask of Motherhood looks at the underlying aspects of motherhood that are usually shunned in society, the disconnection between the mother and the child and the residual trauma from childbirth. She writes: “The reality is, in order to be seen as a “good mum,” many of us project a public face of serenity, control, and self-assurance. This artificially sweet image is what I call the “mask of motherhood.”⁴” She explains that by removing these ‘masks’ motherhood can be embraced realistically with both the positive and negative elements.

Looking at several artists I found myself akin to Nicholas Nixon who photographed his wife's family in the series *The Brown Sisters*. What I identified with was his look at a family with which he was connected but not born into. The same occurs with the family I have chosen to photograph. My partner's family have taken me into their life as part of their greater family yet I remain separate, on the outer rim. It is an extremely interesting place to be as I am invited to join them and see the reality and drama of their lives but I am mostly immune to being part of the drama and thus I can stand back and analyse their family dynamics.

In Nixon's series *The Brown Sisters* he examines the effects of time and ageing on a group of four sisters who pose in the same order each year, Nixon using the same large format and printing only one photo from each session. The series is amazing in the manner in which ageing

¹ Mann, Sally, Immediate Family, Aperture, New York, 1992.

² Hirsch, Marianne, Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Post memory, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts USA, 1997, Pg. 186.

³ Hirsch, Marianne, Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Post memory, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts USA, 1997, Pg. 182.

⁴ Maushart, Susan, The Mask of Motherhood: How Becoming a Mother Changes Everything and Why We Pretend it Doesn't, Penguin, USA, 2000.

and mortality are addressed through the eyes of the sisters. The changes of the years in the faces and the clothing imprint on us the fleeting nature of life and the changes that are inevitable in all of us. In my work I want to use the family in a different manner but to maintain a set up that shows the physical family connections as well as the inevitability of age and death through three generations of one family. I also want to express that our genes are carried through the generations and remain forever as long as the line is carried on.

I chose to look at my partner's family for a few reasons. Being close to yet not a part of them gave me a special look into how their family worked. I became very interested in their family dynamics and seeing how different threads of the parents are reflected in the children and grandchildren. Also the size of the family was very important to me as there are ten children in the middle generation, giving such a variety of people and experiences that existed in the one family unit.

Semester One

Early Shooting

In one of my firsts shoots I used Regina, one of the five sisters and the last to become a mother. She was due in early January so I wanted to take some shots with her pre-birth to capture the experience of pregnancy for her. The depth of her connection to the unborn child was extremely important to me as well as the reality of her purple stretch marks and the fact that she seemed very alone in her journey. This is expressed in Figure 1 where she is surrounded by empty space, sitting alone in the chair and shut in by the grass in the frame.



Fig. 1: *Regina and Presley*



Fig. 2: *Damon and Kealan*

In another of my early shoots I used a lot of rolls on the youngest children in the family. One series of these photos were taken in front of curtains around early afternoon with full sun. The boys were playing around, not too aware of the camera. The nature of their play was something that I love and aimed to capture in these photos. The image of Kealan tugging on his brother's ear worked superbly because of the back lighting and the way the limbs are composed in the image.

In March when the Graduate Diploma program started I continued to shoot, focusing on maternity but not eliminating other elements of the family. On Thursday the 20th of March my partner Andrew and I went to his sister Katrina's house in Canberra for a shoot with her and her 7 month old son Kiah. In this shoot I was hoping to capture their relationship in a

natural way, shooting without posing. It turned into quite an interesting shoot as the war in Iraq began with the US bombing of Baghdad during our time. It provided me with an opportunity to capture the family's responses to the war and how it affected their lives. Katrina, a relatively new mother, had always been fearful of what war of this scale would do to the world that her son had just entered. I believe I captured this essence in an image of her clinging to her child but with fear in her eyes. The use of the camera mounted flash creates a stark white face reflecting her anxiety and the shadow adds to the intensity of the expression deepening the pathos of the scene. During this shoot Andrew and Katrina's father Noel came by and I shot him with Kiah as well as his reactions to the war. The photos from this shoot were very strong and express the ideas of motherhood that I had hoped.

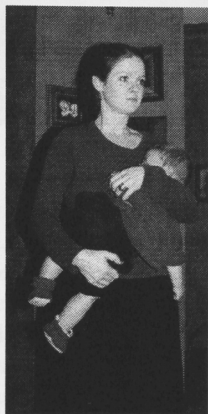


Fig. 3: Katrina and Kiah

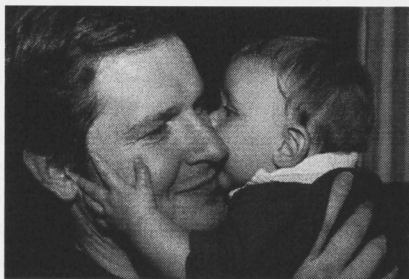


Fig. 4: Andrew and Kiah

While in these early stages of shooting my project I realised I wanted to show the full scope of the family. I decided to widen my view from maternity to shoot all elements that made up the extended family of aunts, uncles and grandparents. Being connected to the family I experienced how much both parents and grandparents put into the growth of a child, both physically and emotionally. It is amazing how you can trace temperaments back to parents, aunts, grandparents and so forth. Each piece of us comes from past relations that hark back to the dawn of time, yet we remain individuals. We are all links in a never-ending chain that reaches far backwards and forwards for generations. Within this framework I still want to explore the reality of motherhood and maternity.

Concepts and Contexts

Documentary Series

In my library research I focussed on a group of artists who had photographed their families or those of their partners. I looked further into Nicholas Nixon past his series *The Brown Sisters* and into Tina Barney's work in the *Theatre of Manners*⁵.

⁵ Barney, Tina, *Theatre of Manners*, Scalo, Zurich, 1997.

Nixon's work with his immediate family shows an intensity of emotion through black and white shots composed in structurally interesting arrangements. His work shows a mixture of love, fear, intimacy, ageing, character and relationships. These elements are all fundamental to my work as well, though I will be presenting them in a different medium of colour works in a with studio head shots as well as the documentary works.



Fig. 5: *The Brown Sisters*, 1975, Nicholas Nixon



Fig. 6: *The Brown Sisters*, 1994, Nicholas Nixon

Tina Barney's work looks at the society and family which she has been born into: upper class America. She documents the family in posed situations that put emphasis on relationships in a specific environment. These constructed tableaux are of a monumental nature portraying family relationships theatrically, this role play creating a tenseness to the photos. My work also explores family relations but by using a documentary snapshot style that captures moments as they happen, revealing the intensity and emotions of the family from unstructured situations. *Marina's Room*, 1987, shows a father and daughter entranced with each other on her canopy bed, her closet full of party dresses. *Peter and Marina*, 1990 reveals the beginning of the disjointed father-daughter relationship a tenseness between the characters. The father-daughter relationship is further examined in *Marina and Peter*, 1997, where a power shift has taken place; The little princess has grown up and is now toting a cigarette, her father a pained expression. The work inspires me in how it shows the relationships of the family through expressions, the environment and time. The family drama that is played out is intense and Barney's photos are rich with content. The intensity of relationships and drama is an element I want to come through in my work.



Fig. 7: *Marina's Room*, 1987, Tina Barney



Fig. 8: *Peter and Marina*, 1990, Tina Barney

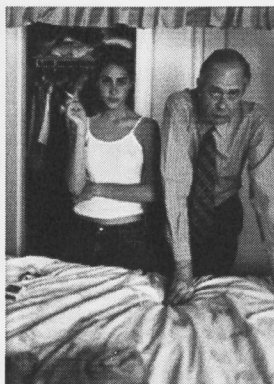


Fig 9: *Marina and Peter*, 1997, Tina Barney

There are several Australian photographers I have also been looking at in context with my research and project. I found the series *The Body Pregnant* by Ella Dreyfus inspiring in relation to the maternity thread in my work. Dreyfus' work mainly revolves around bodies that are usually shunned by society or not celebrated. The bodies she presents in the pregnancy series are very different from the usual image of the pregnant mother. Her images are angular and composed to bring out the distortion of the body in this condition. I identified with the idea of wanted to show an element of society that is usually concealed.

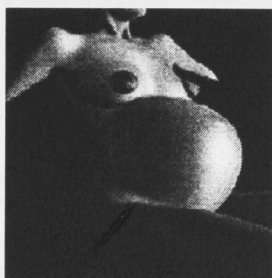


Fig. 10: *Untitled* (From *The Body Pregnant* Series), 1992, Ella Dreyfus

Sandy Edwards is an Australian documentary photographer whose work shows a commitment to the issues of women and Aboriginal people in Australian society. Her work that most interested me was *Paradise is a Place*, a series of black and white works that chronicled the journey of a young girl into adulthood. Edwards uses the backdrop of the NSW south coast for this project. Her images show depth and emotional strength and strongly reflect the work of Sally Mann within the context of Australia.

Anne Ferran works with ideas of history and absence. Her haunting photograms of colonial clothing have a ghost like presence, referencing the people who once wore them but have now passed. Her work goes to the heart of existence and issues of life and death. These intrinsic themes of Ferran's work is also something I would like to bring through my work but by using people as subjects.



Fig. 11: *Female House of Correction (after JW Beattie)*, 2000, Anne Ferran



Fig. 12: *Untitled (Red Nightdress)*, 1998, Anne Ferran

Deborah Paauwe is another Australian photographer who has inspired my work. She creates beautiful and disturbing images of women in adolescence exploring sexuality and the lines between proper and improper ideas in society. I find her work intriguing and her cropping gives a sense of mystery to the images. My work is similar to that of Paauwe's as it investigate another side to the family in society. However I am taking a different approach and focusing on the faces and family interaction to present my theme.



Fig. 13: *Candy Girl*, 2000, Deborah Paauwe



Fig. 14: *Red and Ripe*, 2000, Deborah Paauwe



Fig. 15: *White Dress*, 2000, Deborah Paauwe

Portrait Series

Expanding my project to the family I wanted to continue to produce documentary style photography in unposed situations. This is important to my project as I want to remain true to the theme showing the elements of the family that are usually unseen in greater society but exist for all families. I did not want to produce these images by setting up the situations but by finding them raw and capturing the scene. I wanted to take my idea of the family further and possibly create another element of my project, but at this stage I was not sure what form it would take.

Concurrently I was looking into the work of the Yale graduates and the new wave of female photographers who are exploring what Lucy Soutter describes as “panty photography.”⁶ The artists discussed in the article were united by their tendency to use narration, often with filmic undertones, through their images. Soutter describes the way the images “present frozen suggestive moments commonly likened to...documentary photographs separated from their real world sources and stripped of a typical documentary agenda”⁷ This echoed true for what I want my work to show: documentary scenes presenting the ambiguity of the family. Soutter also examines the domestic environment and subcultures that have been examined by the current generation of photographers. They reference the post-modern idea that “the self is culturally constructed through representations, but also indicated that traces of authenticity may still be found at home; in the significant details, in the eyes and in the body.”⁸ This detail of bodily expression is meaningful to these images. It is my desire that it resonate through my body of work as well.

From this line of research I found the work of Katy Grannan standing out. Her large scale colour portraits have such intensity and emotional depth. She poses her subjects in their homes, selecting and moving pieces of their environment before shooting. Her work captures the drama of the everyday in the expressions of her subjects who chose to be photographed by replying to a newspaper advert. The essence that this work captures is the stark nakedness of character.

Her work inspired me and helped me to form an idea of some aspects for my second series. For this element I decided that I wanted to create a series of portraits that showed everyone in the family that I was examining. I believe that by using such a large family I can examine the

⁶ Soutter, Lucy, “Dial “P” for Panties: Narrative Photography in the 1990’s”, *Afterimage*, Jan, 2000.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

genetic links through the family and also show that individuality shines through. These portraits should be confronting and intense like Grannan's work, showing the emotional depth and stark character. This branch of my work is to explore the physical links of the family, a genetic map that traces the dna through three generations of one family. The idea is to cover a small area of human existence and to show how these links hark back to the dawn of human kind and the possibilities into the future are endless. I wanted it to embody the concept of how much we carry in us from the past, how many people have gone into our existence and also the concept of individuality through this connection.



Fig. 16: *Untitled* (From Poughkeepsie Series), 1999 Katy Grannan **Fig. 17:** *Hyde Park, NY*, 1999, Katy Grannan



Thus my project has now taken on two paths that are separate yet clearly connected. Henceforth these shall be known as the Documentary Series and the Portrait Series. August Sander used portraiture in the late 1800's and early 1900's to document his society. He used the people who were all around him and began grouping them in classifications of their careers and positions in society. They provide an excellent study of physiognomy and exploration of class structure. In my work I want to explore the physiognomy of family genetics through the use of portraiture head shots.

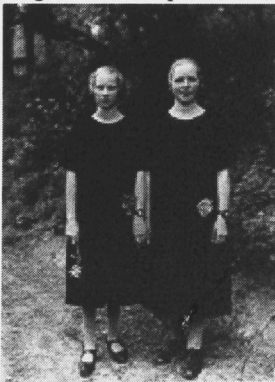
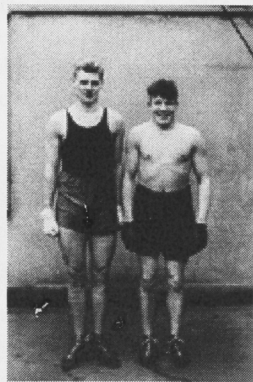


Fig. 18: *Peasant Girls, Westerwald*, 1928, August Sander **Fig. 19:** *Boxer, Paul Rodersten and Hein Heese Klon*, 1928, August Sander



Thomas Ruff's work bears a similarity to what I am aiming to achieve with the look of my portrait shots though his purpose is very different. His series of colour portraits of his friends are framed as passport shots with a white background. The works are all neutral in the expressions of the sitters and offer little in the way of insight into their character. Ruff describes these portraits as 'the authenticity of a manipulated and prearranged reality'⁹, showing that the surface of his images can never show the reality of the sitters personality. In my work I am using a neutral backdrop to capture each family member, using the images as a study in genetics, mapping out familiarity through the family.

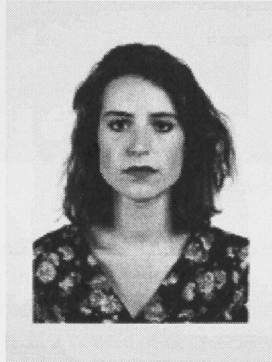


Fig. 20: *Portrait, C. Pilar, 1988, Thomas Ruff*

Shooting Documentary Series

The next shoot that I undertook was at the christening of the family's latest addition, Presley. Playing outside with the children I got some interesting shots of their interaction with me and the camera. The work was good but not what my project was about as there was little interaction, mainly singular portraits. During this time I took shots of Presley who was three months old. These included interaction and touching between the family and the child. Some images from this shoot were very successful and show real intensity. Specifically there is the image of Presley's face in close up. His eyes are unfocused, full of fear. His mouth is open, emphasising this stunned expression. It is an amazing image because of the intensity and emotions in one so young.

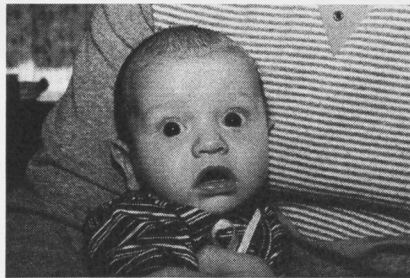


Fig. 21: *Presley*

⁹ From: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/cruelandtender/ruff.htm>

A 30th birthday party for Katrina provided another opportunity to capture the family together. I took some early images of Regan and Tory, two of the grandchildren, before the party. Several of the images were of the boys playing up to the camera and pulling a variety of faces. Some of these were strong and captured some great expressions.



Fig. 22: *Regan and Tory*

At the party I used both colour and black and white film to experiment and to ensure that colour was what I wanted to work in. I was extremely happy with the images produced from this shoot. There were plenty of images showing the family interacting in both play and anxious moments. This party was held a couple of days after my partner had a nervous breakdown resulting in some very emotional images of him at this party. A couple of strong images shone through from these rolls. One showing Katrina with her son Kiah and nephew Kealan looking anxious. She is holding them yet she seems far away, in another world. The black and white images that I shot turned out fairly well but they did not have the same jumpiness and and life that the colour work had.



Fig. 23: *Kealan, Katrina and Kiah*



Fig. 24: *Chez Black & White*

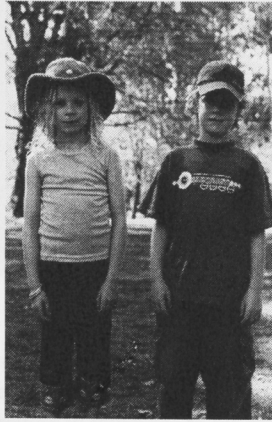


Fig. 25: *Chez and Regan Black & White*

Easter was the next family gathering and opportunity to capture some interactions. I shot quite a lot from this event of the family together and also separately. Some of the strongest images came from three year old Molly. Some beautiful images were the result of her lying on the autumn ground with a bottle in hand. I found these images to be intense, strong and beautiful. The opposing colours on her dress, green and blue, and the clash of the pattern with the grass give the image conflict. The intensity is derived from the lack of a horizon in the image and the placement of Molly's body lying defenceless on the grass, in part foetal position. I had hoped to use these in my project but they still remain on the outer of my main themes, involving little intersection with other family members but it is still an independent element:



Fig. 26: *Molly Fallen 1*



Fig. 27: *Molly Fallen 2*

At the birthday party of Kealan (four) and Tory (five) the experience of face painting provided scope for some interesting images. The children being held still during the painting allowed me to capture the duplicity of emotions. Being held back while having your face painted, an act chosen by the child. Molly, who was being painted as a pig, had a strained expression on her face during the experience, Nolita holding her around the neck. The strength of these images is in the ambiguity and element of touch and affection.



Fig. 28: *Nolita and Molly*

In-between these events there was a lot of shooting of the family. A diversity of images were the result, some strong and pertinent for my projects, others mediocre. A series of images that I shot of Andrew in natural light remain in mind due to his expression and the use of light on his face. I find these images very tender but as beautiful as I find them they do not fit into my final vision as they do not tell us so much about his connection to his family but more to his environment.

Arlen, the youngest of the middle generation celebrated his 21st birthday in May. I shot a few rolls at the party mainly of the family posing together as at regular 21 parties. What came out of these photos is a strong physical link between the family members. A couple of images shone through as capturing vital moments of interaction. One of these involved Kealan and Tory sitting at the poker machines. Kealan is eyeing off Tory who is looking in another direction unaware. This interaction involves both intensity and distraction which is what I find so interesting:



Fig. 29: *Tory and Kealan*

The Scream Series of photos was all in the name of a bit of fun but they turned out quite well. The strongest of these is where Regan wearing the scream mask is facing the camera and Tory who is wearing a towel, his bare back towards the camera. The images encapsulates themes of surprise, fear, intensity and a mixture of textures. I do not believe that the pictures fit into the framework of my project but they stand really well on their own as a bizarre sequence in the space of the family home.



Fig. 30: *Scream Series 2*



Fig. 31: *Scream Series 3*



Fig. 32: *Scream Series 1*



Fig. 33: *Scream Series 4*

My shooting continued with photographing Regan, Tory and Molly in natural settings with natural light. I love the effect that the sunlight had in many of the images, highlighting the children's faces and hair. Most of the photos capture the children playing naturally, some posed, but mostly shot in an interaction with myself. The resulting images are nice and capture the character of the children but does not say much about their relationships with each other. During this shoot I took a couple of images of Floyd with his beloved dog Harlow. As with the others they are nice photos that use the natural light well but are still not quite what I want for my project.

At this stage I was experimenting with modes of presentation for my documentary portraits. I played around collaging the images and also introducing text into the work. These elements did not seem to capture what I had hoped and the images seemed lost in the collage. I thus decided that I wanted to present the images on their own, spaced out across a section of wall at least poster size.

Portrait Series

For my portrait series I wanted to take a different approach in style to that of the documentary project. I looked into producing more professional style shots with the medium format camera and lighting. As this section of my project is highlighting the genetic links of the

family in a tree like structure I wanted the images to be crisp and clean showing the facial features as clearly as possible.

I started this process with a test shoot with Andrew in the studio. This was my first experience with a medium format camera and proved to be an interesting shoot as I learnt how to use the different functions involved. Fortunately I got to use the Mamiya RZ camera which is very similar in structure to that of a 35 mm camera.

I shot Andrew using the tungsten lights and slide film. A problem during the shoot was the strength of the lights as Andrew (and many of his family members) are sensitive to light it was hard to properly light him. Another problem with the studio was that it would be extremely hard to get all of his family to come to the studio for shoots as many of them live out of Canberra and have busy lives. I then decided to use the multi blitz lights to create a portable studio so that I could go to the family instead of them travelling to Canberra.

My first shoot with the multi blitz lights was a big learning experience as well. I used a cardboard backing for these photos and the flash lights with umbrellas attached. I had the lights facing forwards to the subject and on the same level. During this weekend I shot four of the families living in Canberra. The result of the shoot was mixed. The backing was good except that it was not big enough to cover the area I needed for the adult shots. Also the one of the umbrellas blocked the light too much and half the image was in shadow.

My next shoot took me to Cooma to capture the families down there. I experimented with a fabric backing that covered more surface area. I also tried using a different colour backing for the in-laws in the family. For this shoot I turned the lights around and used the umbrellas as reflectors. I was able to shoot all three families in Cooma but unfortunately this shoot had it's problems too. The lights were too low creating a shadow behind the sitter. Also the fabric colour was lost as it did not reflect the lighting well as the blue paint of the wall was showing through the fabric. Using a different colour for the in-laws created an interesting effect but I prefer the stark white background for all the family.

Whilst I had the medium format camera I also shot some portraits that included more of the environment that the family is surrounded by. For these I used Floyd and Robyn, the parents and grandparents of the family. These images were very clear, crisp and strong. They were images that I liked but they did not seem to fit in with the overall project.

Semester Two

Documentary Series

Second semester began with more shooting for my documentary series. So far I had a short list of seven images that I was working with for my final project. My first images were of Andrew interacting with his nephew Kealan. The work came out as an interesting look at different textures and expressions between the two generations. I like the images that resulted but they seem to be missing an element of ambiguity and interaction. I also got some interesting images of Damon having his nappy changed during a crying fit. His expressions are intense and anguished and his limbs are laying at interesting angles.

During this time I also shot a lot of film at Katrina's house with her and her son Kiah. At one of these shoots I captured an interesting moment with Andrew and his younger brother Arlen. They were standing next to each other arms crossed watching the television. The background of

the house really framed and separated them well. I love how the image reinforces the similarity in their faces and expressions.

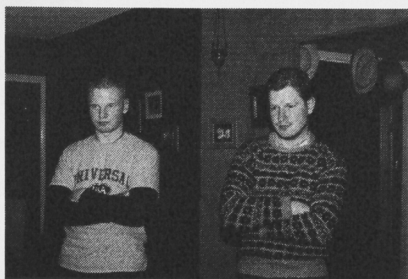


Fig. 34: *Arlen and Andrew*

In the shoots at Katrina's house I also captured some great images of her and her son Kiah. Some tender moments with them kissing each other as well as some intense expressions. No one image really stood out for my project but there was some potential there.

Another trip to Cooma resulted in some interesting and ambiguous images. The strongest ones that appealed to me were of Kealan and his father Shane. They are playing together but the image is hard to work out and place. There are also the images of Damon and his mother Nolita. These to me are very tender photos of their connection as they seem to be absorbed in each other in this close embrace.

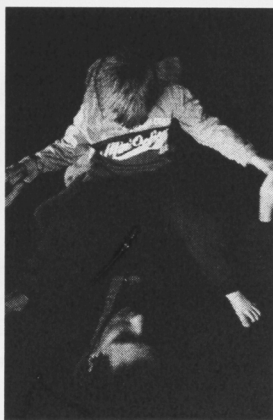


Fig. 35: *Kealan and Shane*

The first birthday of Kiah was the opportunity I used to photograph my portrait series but I was also able to shoot some images for my documentary project. The strongest images from this shoot involve the children and their varied emotions on the day of the birthday party. Two photos of Kealan stood out from the pack for me. His poses and expressions show his emotion at the time so perfectly. His inverted nature and the grumpiness of children are expressed in these images:

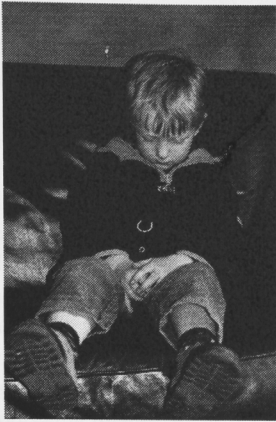


Fig. 36: *Kealan*

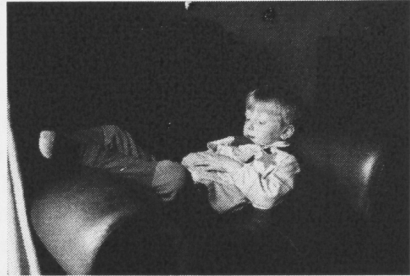


Fig. 37: *Kealan as Woody*

The next week provided another opportunity to shoot the children playing and interacting with each other in a group of cousins. The images that I shot involve a lot of the children playing and having fun and the results. Two of my favourite images is of the children playing on a fence. One of these shows the backs of Kealan and Damon, framed well with the grass, fence and the bodies of the boys. The other frontal version shows the interaction of the children and the moment where Damon is falling off the fence. I think this image captures the moment really well although the framing is a little off, however my main emphasis is on the emotions.

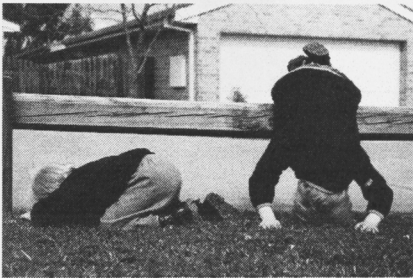


Fig. 38: *Damon and Kealan*

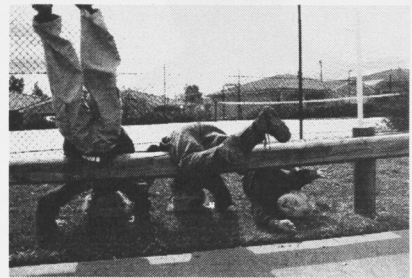


Fig. 39: *Regan, Kealan and Damon*

Portrait Series

With all the lighting experience and experimentation from semester one I went into my next portrait shoot with the confidence that I had finally got the right formula. I bought some foam core that served as a large white reflective backing. The lighting problems were to be resolved by lifting the lights so there was no shadow as well as using clear umbrellas in front of the multi blitz flash lights. The resulting negative were very encouraging and the best so far but they still had a little tweaking necessary. The lighting was good for the adult sitters but were too high when the younger children sat. The film also appeared to be a little underdeveloped.

To combat these problems for my next shoot I planned to set up the camera and lights so that both adults and children can sit with the same distance from the camera but with the lights brought down or up relative to the height of the sitter.

The next major shoot that was set up was planned to coincide with the first birthday of Kiah. One of the multi blitz lights was out broken so I had to adjust my lighting strategy. I used a metz flash on one side with a reflector and the multi blitz light on the other. I also bracketed the shots so that I could get the correct exposure. This set up worked really well I used 11 rolls of Kodak Portra Vivid Colour 400 and I was relieved to get some final negatives to work with.

The next weekend I had another shoot set up to capture the rest of the family. The set up was the same as the previous week and I shot 10 rolls. The negatives were the same as the previous week which was the aim, thus the shoots were very successful. I then began the printing process to view the images as prints before producing large final images.

The following images are the result of my work with the medium format camera and lighting this year. The backgrounds have been masked to make the images jump out to the viewer and to keep the images clear and crisp. The portrait shots will be laid out in the format of a family tree linking the members in genetic generational lines.



Fig. 40: *Noel*



Fig. 41: *Steve*



Fig. 42: *Wendy*



Fig. 43: *Alan*

Printing

To begin the printing process and reintroduce myself to the new darkrooms I printed my studio works onto 8 x 10 paper. This was also an excellent way to view my prints to see what I was working with. The prints turned out well but revealed some high contrast and shadow areas that needed to be worked on. The next step was to work out the size I desired for my works and to purchase paper. For the studio portraits I decided to make them 60 cm x 60 cm which is a little larger than life size but work very effectively. For the documentary style images I decided on 50 cm x 75 cm so that the 35 mm film doesn't blow out too much but gives the detail of the image. I purchased a roll of Kodak Supra in Lustre to print my portrait series and began to print the large scale images, working with burning tools that I made for each portrait.

During the printing process I experimented making the studio portraits larger, using the full width of the paper. This meant that the works were 75 cm x 75 cm, making a considerable difference to the images. I was extremely pleased with the new size and decided to reprint the works to meet these proportions. It was a long and arduous process to print the works but it was a immense learning experience as I gained the knowledge in colour printing and paper handling.

The two series came together at this stage when printing and the exhibition were finally completed.

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APPENDIX 2:

Original Project Proposal: **maternal**

Thouraya Hammami

Aims of the Proposal

The birth of any baby is also the birth of the mother. This is one of the most life changing experiences there is. The relationship between the mother and child is strong, whether positive or negative, and this bond transcends mere relationship. For my project **maternal** I am going to explore the idea of motherhood and maternity, through a realistic lens. I will examine and document this idea through a group of sisters who are all mothers with children ranging from new-born to preteen in age. I will be focusing on the bond that occurs between mothers and their children, and showing this in a light that represents the real side of motherhood, both the ups and the downs of the experience.

In my undergraduate work I created a colour series of portraits in situ exploring people and the spaces they create around themselves. Through this project I presented an idea of identity reflected in pictures and objects in which we live. I also created a black and white series that examined the idea of personality and the different forms of identity this takes. For this project I want to take the idea of identity further and make it specific to the theme of motherhood and the maternal bond. I hope to show the range and diversity that this takes in life by looking at a group of women with the same background.

Methods and Resources

The method in which I want to present this project is through a medium format camera used in a both studio environment and in the home, the main arena of motherhood. I would like to use different forms of lighting to portray the emotions of the female subjects. I want to use colour film and produce large scale images.

During the course I aim to develop my studio and lighting practices by taking an undergraduate lighting subject as a part of the coursework. The resources that my project will require is a medium format camera, lighting and a colour darkroom, which are all available at the Canberra School of Art.

What makes my approach to this theme of maternity distinctive is that I will be documenting a range of approaches to motherhood from a group of sisters. This family connection is important for showing the bond of maternity develop through different eyes with the same background and upbringing. I aim to encourage the idea that each woman's experience in childbirth and motherhood is individual and cannot be viewed as one universal experience.

Context of Study

The wider context of my study involves a range of artists and writers.

Ella Dreyfus has produced two bodies of work examining the bodies of pregnant women that celebrated the dignity of a body that is usually suppressed. *Pregnancy Series* (1992) and *The Body Pregnant* (1993) brought out the image of the pregnant body in it's different shapes and forms, celebrating the beauty as well as the individuality of the experience.

The Mask of Motherhood by Susan Maushart and (*misconceptions*) by Naomi Wolf have both worked to bring the truth of motherhood to the world, rather than hiding the reality behind

false images. I see that my work would fit in this area where the reality of the experience is often shrouded in silence. I propose to show the real side of maternity, both the positive and negative aspects.

Sally Mann and Nicholas Nixon both capture the deep truth of a subject and their images really bring out the heart of both the children and adults that they photograph. In my work I would like to produce a similar effect of getting to the heart of the subject. My work can also be seen in the context of Nixon's documentary portraiture where he photographed his wife and her sisters through the years, from the 70's to the present, photographing them together each year. This series was very interesting in the way that the women grew and changed in small ways through time.

Joyce Tenneson celebrates the power of women and motherhood in many of her works. She examines the strength and light that women contain as well as the bond between them and their children. This is one aspect that I would like to include in my work, taking it to the themes of the trials, tribulations and celebration of maternity.

List of Artists Researched

Ella Dreyfus	Anne Ferran	Sarah Moon	Lennart Nilsson
Nicholas Nixon	Sally Mann	Joyce Tenneson	

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APPENDIX 3: Curriculum Vitae

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UNSW (The University of New South Wales)

B. Arts Double Major in Film and English 1999-2001
Minors in Photomedia, Textiles, Media and Computing

Exhibitions

UNSW School of Theatre, Film and Dance
Graduating Film Show 2001

Employment

National Gallery of Australia

Information Services 2002-Present

Fox Studios Australia

Wardrobe Department 1999-2001

Experience

2001 Short Film *Blindsight*

1997 Costume Designer for Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

1997 Costume Designer for Menander's *The Girl From Samos*

1996 ABC Television Scenic Art Department

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